

# Life of the Spirit

A BLACKFRIARS REVIEW



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## Life of the Spirit

A review devoted to the theology and practice of prayer and the spiritual life, it is designed to assist in the re-establishment of the Catholic tradition of ascetical and mystical writing in the English language. Contributors are therefore encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers.

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MIND, WILL AND FEELING IN PRAYER

By

FERDINAND VALENTINE, O.P.

If we consider objectively the question of whether in practice meditation should be the proximate or remote preparation for prayer, what are we to say? In deciding, two factors should be taken into consideration:

(i) In practice when following formal meditation it is difficult, frequently impossible, to decide such questions as: When should I begin to make acts and for how long? Am I using my imagination enough or too freely? Am I thinking too much or too little? When I cannot think at all what shall I do? This last question is the nodal point of the whole problem. Most of us find it possible to pray when it is quite impossible to think. At morning prayer simple ideas in the form of acts can be elicited by the will, whereas constructive thinking often cannot. We have control of the one, too little control of the other. For this reason formal meditation imposes such a strain on average Catholics (and not least on over-worked religious sisters) that they give it up in despair, either because they cannot think or else because they want to pray; often it is both. 'Meditation', writes Father Baker, 'in which discourse is employed, is little more than philosophical contemplation of God, delaying the fixing of the heart and affections on God, which are only acceptable to him'. (*Holy Wisdom*, p. 343.)

(ii) Definite advantages accrue from dividing meditation and prayer into two separate exercises:

First, our prayer, even when it is vocal prayer, is more likely to develop normally. We notice this with those brought up to use the ordinary means to devotion such as the Rosary, the Way of the Cross, the Holy Hour, Prayer-books, etc. Indeed this kind of simple, direct mental-prayer fed by instruction from the pulpit would seem to be the normal method of the Church.

Secondly, if spiritual reading is done prayerfully, kneeling, at a time when the mind is alert, and if 'we think of divine things'—to quote St Francis of Sales—'not to learn but to make ourselves love them', we shall reap great fruit from our subsequent prayer. I am not suggesting we should deliberately recall and use our spiritual reading at time of prayer; that is unnecessary: we cannot help using our knowledge of God when we turn to love him. What we learn about him through spiritual reading and in other ways

becomes an integral part of our attitude of mind and indeed of our very selves.

Turning now to vocal or interior prayer, one of two reasons prompts the choice of a method of prayer: I may choose *objectively*, that is, the prayer which is best in itself, such as the *Our Father* or an act of worship; or I may choose *subjectively*, that is, the prayer I want or feel like. In the former are two factors—understanding and will, but predominantly will; in the latter three factors—understanding, will and sentiment, of which the chief is sentiment: it is *congenial* prayer. The former is called by Father Baker 'The Prayer of Immediate Acts', the latter 'The Prayer of Sensible Affections'. It will be seen at once that these two kinds of mental prayer are not essentially vocal or exterior prayer because they do not use fixed, uniform acts; nor are they meditation beginning with a formal or an informal mental *discursus*: the emphasis is not on the mind but on the will in the former and the affections in the latter.

### (1) *The Prayer of Immediate Acts*

Meditation is said to be thinking about God till we want to pray to him. The Prayer of Immediate Acts is praying to God whether we want to or not. It differs from vocal or exterior prayer in two ways:

- (i) By reason of a brief, preliminary use of the understanding.
- (ii) The acts are spontaneous, following no set form.

'The exercise' (of this prayer) says Father Baker, 'is performed chiefly by the superior will, but not without some use of the imagination and understanding; for, in making the act, the understanding must use the sensible image of the thing in which the act consists. Still, there is no formal discourse or reasoning; there is merely the apprehension of the matter by the understanding, and the main part of the work is done by the will, which produces an efficacious act towards God. . . .

'The acts may consist of any good matter which can be referred to God or his love and service, such as matter for resignation, patience, obedience, humility, sorrow for sins and purpose of amendment, or of avoiding the occasions of them, or the exercise of charity. Such matter the soul forms into an act, intending to do the thing or suffer it for God. There are other acts which refer to God immediately without reference to the soul herself, as when she congratulates God on being what he is, and wishes or wills that all should love him and serve him, and other such acts of good-will and benevolence towards God. These acts are called immediate acts'. (*Inner Life of Dame Gertrude More*, Chapter X.)

Although the Prayer of Immediate Acts is praying in the way we *ought* rather than in the way we *want*, this prayer can and does produce in the soul an ardent desire for prayer. The superior will can decree not only the nature of the act but also the manner of

its expression—whether or not it shall be expressed by the whole person, that is, uttered by the lips and symbolically interpreted by bodily gesture in the form of prostrations, inclinations, genuflections, etc. ‘By means of such actions’, says St Augustine, ‘a person does stir himself to pray and lament more humbly and with greater fervour.’ (*Loco cit.*) The Prayer of Immediate Acts was largely the prayer of St Dominic, who would genuflect and prostrate his body hundreds of times before the altar or the crucifix. Saint Margaret of Hungary, O.P.<sup>1</sup> is another striking example. In practice, for ordinary people this means (a) that we pray regularly and for a definite period each day whether we want to or not, (b) we use some ordered approach such as the A.C.T.S., and (c) we dispose our body to help and interpret our prayer, for example, by joining the hands, closing the eyes, bowing the head, kneeling upright or standing, outstretching the arms. Those unacquainted with the influence of body over mind in prayer are invited to make the following simple experiment. Recite the Creed twice—the first time standing with the arms folded; then a second time kneeling with the arms outstretched, and eyes closed.

### (2) *The Prayer of Sensible Affections.*

This prayer should be studied very carefully, as it is perhaps the most popular approach of all. Father Baker tells us, in his study on the prayer of Dame Gertrude More, that it is suited especially for beginners in the spiritual life. It is ‘sensible’, he says, ‘because the prayer is exercised chiefly in the emotions and senses; *affection*, as distinguished from the understanding, working by the imagination and sensible images.

‘Now, there are some dispositions that are naturally more affectionate towards God and rational creatures; and if they have either of the propensities to seek God, interiorly or exteriorly, they can easily exercise their sensible affections towards him, and without seeking reasons for it. Indeed they have a kind of loathing for seeking reasons, as they are already well-disposed to love God. Nevertheless, at first they scarcely know how to exercise or employ their sensible affections on God, through the very abundance of it. Many of them are incapable of meditation or immediate acts. . . . And the souls that have such an abundance of affection must exercise it in some way or other. And though they have the habit of affection, they often do not know how to use it, either through want of experience or because they are not just at the moment in the humour for it. For such affectionate dispositions are very subject to sudden changes of feeling—sometimes brought about by an internal cause, as some slight indisposition, or by an external cause, as change in the weather, or a trifling discomfort or annoyance. At such times these souls fall into great aridity, obscurity, and distress, and they are unable to help themselves with meditation.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Margaret Princess of Hungary*, by S.M.C. (Blackfriars, Oxford).

'This was often the case with Dame Gertrude, and for the above-mentioned reason. And her remedy, which was a good one and may be recommended to others, was this: she gathered out of books examples for the exercise of sensible affections, and she made other acts of the same kind, as suggested themselves to her; for example: 'O my God, when shall I love thee as thou deservest to be loved?' 'O that I were free from myself, that I might love thee!' 'When shall I be united to thee?' 'When shall I love thee with all my heart and soul?' The acts which suggested themselves to her were the most profitable, but in default of these she made use of what she could get out of books, which seemed suitable to her spiritual inclination.

'During the periods of aridity and depression, when nature refuses to help or concur in the exercise, the soul should adhere to her exercise of affections, even though they are produced without pleasure or light, unless she can see how to do better. And God will accept her goodwill, and will promote her spiritual welfare in the way he sees best'. (*Inner Life of Dame Gertrude More*. Chapter X.)

Many young people prefer this approach to God; though it is precisely here they may be wrongly directed. The reason for this preference is twofold:

(1) Some beginners in the spiritual life are expansive, generous, affectionate by nature, and can hardly be helped by any other method. They need the spontaneous approach of love, rightly ordered.

(2) Others have a religious disposition, mainly due to the influence of a good Catholic mother during the formative years of early childhood. It is then that the child's instinctive emotions, especially of love, are grouped round the central figure of our Lord. They have been brought up with Christ further back than they can remember. He is woven into the texture of their lives. They would as lief seek motives for loving their own mother as kneel and solemnly inquire into the reasons for loving him. He is their Friend of friends, accepted.

Many souls drawn to our Lord in this traditionally Catholic way do, in fact, 'loathe seeking reasons'. St Teresa of Avila had them in mind when she wrote:

'Address him sometimes as a Father, or as a Brother, or again as a Master or as your Bridegroom: sometimes in one way and sometimes in another, for he will teach you what he wishes you to do. Do not be foolish: remind him that he has promised to be your Bridegroom, and treat him as if he were'. (*Way of Perfection*. Chapter XXVIII.)

Similar advice is given by St Jane Frances of Chantal:

'I strongly recommend to you, my dear daughters, the prayer of the heart, that is, that which is not made with the understand-

ing but with the heart. It is made in this way: when we are humbled before God and placed in his presence, let us not force our brain to make considerations, but use our affections, arousing them as much as possible; and if we cannot arouse them by interior words, we must use vocal'. (*Conference 33.*)

Two principal dangers beset these souls, especially when a naturally affectionate temperament reinforces a well formed religious disposition. Prayer may become:

Either—*too emotional.*

Or—*capricious and unstable.*

Such souls are apt to swing dangerously from one extreme to the other, and to be overwhelmed at times by 'great aridity, obscurity and distress'.

Taking these in order, let us listen once again to Father Baker:

(1) 'The difference between sensible affections and sensible devotions lies in this—that the latter is wholly confined to the sensible nature, and the intellective soul is, as it were, drowned in it, so that she is little, if at all, spiritually enlightened as regards herself, but is rather wholly darkened. But Dame Gertrude made but a brief halt in her sensible nature, which after having produced a little devotion towards God after this fashion, she presently was carried up into the intellective soul, in which the rest of her recollection was exercised without further use of her sensible nature. The latter provided her with a step whereby to ascend into the spirit'. . . . (*loco cit.*)

In a word, this means that souls who follow this method should use their sensible attraction as a means, and not as an end. They should love God and not their prayer.

(2) Speaking of the measures to be taken during the different times of emotional reaction, Fr Baker says:

'When nature refuses to help or concur in the exercise, the soul should adhere to the exercise of affections, even though they are produced without pleasure or light, unless she can see how to do better'. (*Ibidem.*)

He stresses the advantage, in such an emergency, of selecting suitable acts from a prayer book.

A MEDIEVAL ENGLISH POEM  
ON THE PASSION  
*Edited by I.E. and A.R.*

THERE was recently discovered in the library of Llanarth Court, Raglan, a Book of Hours of the early fifteenth century which is of more than usual interest. The chief contents of the book are those customary in a Book of Hours of the Sarum Use, namely, the Little Office of Our Lady, the Penitential Psalms, the Office of the Dead, a collection of prayers to our Lord, and one to a Guardian Angel. A considerable number of leaves is missing from the MS., which in its present state begins at once with Lauds and lacks part of Prime and the whole of Terce and Sext. There are no miniatures, but there are a number of elaborately decorated initials, with floriated designs in gold, blue and red, some of which have been damaged by a later binder's trimming of the upper margins. Twenty leaves have been heavily annotated in the lower margins by a sixteenth century Protestant owner of the book. Presumably the same owner was responsible for the erasure of the commemoration of St Thomas of Canterbury at Lauds, in conformity with Henry VIII's suppression of liturgical honour to that saint.

In the Litany of the Saints there are included Saints Swithun, Birinus, Edward, Richard, Edith, which points to the probable Southern English origin of the MS. Nothing is certainly known of the history of the MS., but the Protestant annotations suggest that it has not always been in the possession of the Herbert family, who have at Treowen and Llanarth maintained an unbroken Catholic continuity.

The principal interest of the book lies in the last two leaves, which contain forty lines of an English poem on the Passion. It was not unusual in the later Middle Ages for Books of Hours to contain a supplementary section of vernacular devotions. The considerable number of leaves missing at the end of the Llanarth MS. presumably formed such a supplement. The incomplete poem which remains, and a transcript of which appears below, is typical of the spirituality which developed in England in the course of the 14th century. This will be at once evident to those familiar with the poems printed by Professor Carleton Brown in his *Religious Lyrics of the 14th Century*. One poem especially (No. 7) has not only a strong general likeness to the Llanarth poem, but is sometimes verbally identical. However, it seems that the present poem has not hitherto been printed, and apart from its linguistic interest, its beauty and spontaneity of religious fervour give it a right to be better known.

Jhu sweet ihu lorde myne  
 My lyve my saul & al is thyne  
 Undo my hert and lyght therine  
 And save me lord fro hell pyne<sup>1</sup>

Jhu swete upon the roode  
 For me thu blede thi swete bloode  
 Out of thi herte ther come a floode  
 Thi modyr it sawe wit drery moode<sup>2</sup>

Jhu swete bryght and scheene<sup>3</sup>  
 To the lord my moon i meene<sup>4</sup>  
 For mary loue that myeld iebeene  
 Lat thi endeles mercy on me be scene

Jhu swete my saules foode  
 All thi warkes be full goode  
 Thou bought us upon the roode  
 And shed theron thin hert bloode

Jhu swete of al thyng best  
 In thi loue mak me stedfest  
 That wher so i go est or weste  
 Euer in thi loue that i fynde reste

Jhu sweet wele may he be  
 That the in thi ioy shal se  
 With loue cordys drawe thu me  
 That i may come and wone<sup>5</sup> wit the

Jhu no sange may so swete be  
 Ne no joy in this worlde ne gle<sup>6</sup>  
 Swete lorde as is the loue of the  
 Kyng of heuene thu grant it me

Jhu thi loue was so fre  
 That from heuene it broughth the  
 For gret loue & pete<sup>7</sup>  
 Upon the cros thu hongyst for me

Jhu to thi discipiles deer  
 Thou sayd wit a drer cheer<sup>8</sup>  
 As they say all in feir  
 A litill before thu taken weer

Jhu thu went upon thi feete  
 To the mount of oleuete  
 And to thi fadyr ther thu leete<sup>9</sup>  
 Fayr wordis wyth hert sweete

<sup>1</sup> Pains of Hell.    <sup>2</sup> Melancholy mood.    <sup>3</sup> Fair.    <sup>4</sup> I make my complaint.  
<sup>5</sup> Dwell.    <sup>6</sup> Gladness.    <sup>7</sup> Pity.    <sup>8</sup> With a sad countenance.    <sup>9</sup> Uttered.

## CONVERSION IN LANGLAND

By

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

LANGLAND has vividly portrayed the life of sin in the world. From the realm of vice, social as well as individual, the soul steps into the realm of grace through what is known as the first conversion. By this act the dead is quite literally raised to life; it is quite literally an event of a standing with the raising of Lazarus—a miracle. As with all miracles, the act can be examined on the purely natural plane; the psychologist can describe what he discovers on the human side of the process. It is well to look at conversion in these test tubes first, even if it comes to be regarded in this partial light simply as a process of unification or of a vital synthesis.<sup>1</sup>

Conversion has been described as the shifting of the centre of gravity of the inner self, a psychological phenomenon common to science, art, letters . . . as well as to religion.<sup>2</sup> The individual's ideas are first of all grouped in bunches, more or less isolated and independent like the amoeba in a very low form of life. But through concentration on a single idea, the other ideas group themselves round this central aim and unify all the individual's energies, just indeed as the amoeba is grouped in a higher form of life. The ideas which do not fit may however gather round another, more or less antagonistic central purpose and the result is a 'divided self'—one group may be selfish and vicious, the other dominated by charity. 'Conversion thus means that a certain set of ideas which had been "marginal", or had become an unconscious disposition, more or less suddenly emerges and takes the central place. To these the man devoted himself and from these he now works'.<sup>3</sup> The set of ideas accumulates energy in the unconscious mind until it bursts forth into consciousness so that the process is in fact a gradual one.

This is one way of describing the phenomena, and does seem to convey something that happens normally to the converted, with the exception of the undeniably sudden conversion such as that of St Paul. But even for St Paul there may have been some predisposing reflection on the ideas of the Christians whom he had been persecuting. And we may apply the diagnosis more closely to the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sydney Herbert Mellone, *The Beginnings of a Psychology of Religion* (Oxford 1939) pp. 152 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> Mellone, p. 153. St Catherine describes the first conversion in chapter 51 of her Dialogue: 'The soul gathers together with the hand of free choice her powers in my name . . . etc.' Conversion must include an act of free will; this the psychologists tend to overlook.

conversion which concerns us here, that is not so much of a conversion to the faith as one from death to life within the faith. Hitherto the faith has been a reality in the man's mind but inoperative and without effect upon his life, because it had been independent of his other ideas and pushed to one side. The sinner in this sense is a divided personality—one set of ideas is practical and concerned with his daily life, the other inoperative concerned with the realm of the divine from which his life is severed. Fluctuations there may be when the faith tries to take the centre of energy, but this does not necessarily mean the beginning of conversion; there may be no true synthesis or unification of the two selves and the faith in effect remains 'marginal'. The Vision of Piers Plowman is full of characters who have 'God in their gorge' but not in their hearts. The unconverted Christian is a contradiction to himself.

For William Langland himself the central idea bringing vital energy had not been the Catholic faith in which he had been reared, or at best this had been only fitfully in the centre. He had hoped that with a moderately faithful return to his duties from time to time he would, as a 'city beggar' deserve some little share in the reward his faith pointed out to him.

'This is certain', I said, 'and sadly must I confess it'.

I have lost time away and time wasted.

And yet I hope, as he who has often bargained,  
And lost and lost, but at last happened  
To buy such a bargain that he was blest forever,  
And held his loss at a leaf beside his latter fortune,  
Such wealth had he won through the words of his Master:  
*Simile est regnum coelorum thesauro abscondito in agro, etc.*  
*Mulier quae invenit dragmam, etc.*

So I hope to have from him who is Almighty

A glimpse of his grace, and begin a season

When all times of my time will turn to profit.

(*Passus V, 96-107. cp Dawson in The English Way, pp. 167-8.*)

But Reason and Conscience easily discern that this good intention will remain inoperative unless he acts upon the impulse at once, so that the idea may cease from loitering on the circumference, a mere velleity, not fitting in with the rest of his life. *Gratia cooperans* is offered by God at this point; reason and conscience are not working independently of the special, divine intervention; their voices are not simply natural words of admonition, the grace of God lies in their words. They insist that William act upon this divine instinct and thus he is a convert.

'I counsel you', quoth Reason, 'to begin quickly'

The life which is loyal and lawful in the spirit'.

'Yea, and continue it', said Conscience—*And I came to the Church.*

I came to the Church to do God honour,

Before the Cross on my knees I knocked my breast. . . .

(*Passus V*, 108-112.)

So, touched by contrition, he enters on that season when 'all times of my time will turn to profit'. Faith becomes a vital force at last as he kneels in the church before the crucifix, whence flows grace to all mankind.

Faith indeed holds the first place in conversion. And at risk of seeming Protestant this must be insisted upon in the elementary stages of a spiritual career. Evidently faith must precede all the other virtues in respect of its being the first link of the soul with God in the supernatural order, training the mind upon the one object, known only through this gift of belief and known in such a way as to inspire all good actions. *Nihil volitum nisi praecognitum*. A man cannot place his foot on the first rung of the ladder unless he see that there is a ladder, leading up to something supreme.

We are not here speaking so much of the necessity of faith for salvation as of the nature of the initial faith of the newly converted, and of the part it plays in the first purification of the soul. In his treatise on faith St Thomas includes a short article on whether the purificatioin of the heart is an effect of faith; for in St Peter's speech to the assembled apostles and ancients, in *Acts xv*, 9, he speaks of the faith as purifying their hearts (II-II, vii, 2).

Elsewhere St Thomas has written: 'The spiritual life is attributed to faith in so far as in the act of faith the spiritual life is first manifested' (*De Veritate*, xxviii, 1 ad 5). The first glimmer of the spiritual life appears in faith, even though that faith be unformed by charity; the soul is converted only in one section of its mind, not as a whole, as was the case with those for whom Langland was writing. But by subjecting itself to First Truth in faith the intellect is at least purified from an inordinate attachment to lower creatures, for in the intellectual order such an attachment amounts to the impurity of error. Even 'unformed' faith, faith without charity, purifies the mind from this dross of blindness and stupidity. The mind realises the supereminence of divine truth and prostrates itself. The mind requires a fundamental catharsis before it can be joined to the supreme Object of all knowledge and the supreme End of all willing. This implies an action fraught with salutary, intellectual 'pain', in which the mind is straightened, is conformed to a truth it cannot see. In those things that it can see distinctly and essentially the intellect retains a special type of freedom. It occupies a place of superiority whence it looks down in judgment upon what is perceived. Always constrained by truth, the intellect demands the right to see and sort the evidence before it decides. But in faith the intellectual action, ruled here by the will, is blind. The mind assents to what it cannot see. The chariness with which people will accept anything only on authority, the strong sense, and almost fear, that the

Catholic faith demands a step in the dark, these reluctances show clearly that the subjection of the mind to the revelation of First Truth involves a 'mental mortification'.

Thus in the assent of faith are implied the first movements of purification and the first step into that sphere at the centre of which lies the Beatific Vision. If we are speaking of a complete purification of a man as a whole, however, we should not consider the unnatural state of the soul having faith without charity, for in unformed faith we use the conception of purification only analogically, of one particular faculty alone. St Thomas, in the article referred to above, considers the fulness of faith informed by love; and it is in this that the first true purgation is to be found. 'The rational creature is more noble than all temporal and corporal things. And therefore he is made impure in so far as he subjects himself to temporal things by loving them. And from such impurity he is purified by the contrary motion, namely when he tends towards that which is above him, viz. towards God himself. But in this movement the first principle is faith: "For he that cometh to God must believe. . . ." *Hebrews xi, 6.* And therefore the first principle of the purification of the heart is faith, which causes a perfect purification if it is perfected by the formation of charity' (II-II, vii, 2). The first step in the spiritual life is therefore to base one's self, mind and will, on First Truth, which is God himself. Belief in and love of truth bring with them the '*aversio*' from the things of earth and the '*conversio*' to God, and in that turning away from evil and turning to good lies the act of contrition.

This is indeed the main lesson to be derived from the first part of the Vision of Piers the Plowman. Langland was writing, it must be remembered, chiefly for men who in his view believed the basic truths of the Catholic religion with a faith unformed by charity. The Vision opens with the sight of the castle of Truth—a tower on a toft artfully fashioned—and the pit of hell, with a 'field full of folk I found between them' (*Induction*, 14 sqq). This is the world he knew with all kinds of men gathered there. His purpose is to assist these people in their journey to the Tower of Truth, the *Veritas Prima*, God the Father (cf. *Passus I*, 14 sqq). This is the call that Piers the Plowman, the common man who becomes identified with our Lord himself, makes to all his kith and kin, the call to Truth.

God knows not, nor any saint in heaven,  
The man who betrays truth, he tells us in the gospel:  
*Amen dico vobis nescio vos. . .*  
Seek Saint Truth who may save all men (*Passus V*, 162-4).

It was Faith, not law or logic, which cleansed 'the common woman in a public dinner' (*Passus XI*, 220 sqq). Belief is a loyal help and leads to Contrition and Repentance (*Passus XIV*, 90). Not only is Truth the guarantee of salvation coming down and dwelling

in the converted one (cf. *Passus* I, 129; V, 744), but the Christian life is simply seeking after truth. With this once realized all the well intentioned dwellers in the field of the world will desire to set out on the journey.

Then a thousand men thronged together,  
Crying upward to Christ and his clean Mother  
That grace might go with them to seek Truth

*(Passus* V, 641-3).

They do not yet know the true way and consequently stumble round in every direction until Piers arrives and begins to set them on the road to Truth.

An insistence on the importance of faith and truth in first conversion to the exclusion of other elements would lead to some form of Lutheran conception of justification by faith. The soul itself is changed in its very innermost being by this great miracle of transformation. St Augustine declared that the justification of the sinner is a greater thing than the creation of heaven and earth; and St Thomas is no less sweeping: *Bonum gratiae unius (hominis) majus est quam bonum nature totius universi* (I-II, cxiii, 9 ad 2).<sup>4</sup> The infusion of grace which is the essence of first conversion brings with it a whole system or organism of salvation. The first manifestation and the beginning of purgation lies in faith, as we have seen, but not without the other two theological virtues, especially Charity. At the same time, in that very instant when the soul suddenly throbs with the participation of the divine life, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost and all the moral virtues flow into the mind and will. In the first infusion these virtues and gifts remain in a seminal state, hemmed in and limited by the corruption of the nature in which they reside. But immediately the conversion has been effected, purification begins, inspired by love, developing all these virtues, opening the heart to the movement of the gifts.

So Langland describes the way to Truth primarily as a learning to love, and Fr Dunning has written of this aspect of the Vision:

Every phrase of the description of the road to Truth has been carefully weighed. The pilgrims must first go through Meekness, Conscience and the precepts of the Decalogue. The significance of the position of Meekness is seen from the words of St Thomas: "Meekness prepares a man for the knowledge of God by removing obstacles to that knowledge, first by making him master of himself through the abatement of anger; and again inasmuch as it is a point of meekness not to contradict the words of truth, as many men do contradict them under the excitement of anger" (II-II, clvii, 21 ad 1). Compare Rolle: "He is stalwart, that is meek; for all ghostly strength comes from meekness. On whom rests the Holy Ghost? On a meek soul. Meekness governs and

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. R. P. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Les Trois Conversions*, pp. 27 sq.

keeps us in all our temptations, so that they overcome us not'' (*Form of Living X*; Heseltine's ed: p. 43).

'Conscience, here said to be the realization that Christ knows truly whether we are obeying the moral law or not, is a reference to Conscience in the proper sense: the inexorable judgment of Reason on the moral goodness or badness of human actions. . . . The Decalogue (with the sole exception of the determination of the Sabbath) is merely the Natural Law, the Old Law of the Israelites, and is the preliminary step—as Langland here depicts it—to the New or Evangelical Law, here signified by the Court, "clear as the sun".'<sup>5</sup>

This is Fr Dunning's comment on the passage where Piers describes the way to Truth:

You must go through meekness, you men and women,  
Till you come to Conscience, and till Christ knows surely  
That you love our Lord liefest of all things,  
And your neighbour next, and in no way hurt him  
Otherwise than you would he should do to you.  
Etc., etc. (*Passus V*, 694 sqq.)

## OUR KNOWLEDGE AFTER DEATH

By

WALTER JEWELL

IT is a commonplace to talk of death as the Great Change, but even men who revert quite often to the life of the spirit may sometimes realise with a kind of mild shock how utterly spiritual our lives must then become. We have before us an altogether unique experience, and it is natural enough that we should await its inevitable advent with interest and curiosity.

Yet the liveliest imagination will not help us in a matter so completely beyond the veil of the senses. In *Paradise Lost* Milton uses all the mighty imagery of a great poet to depict the war of the angels, and yet leaves us with a profound sense of unreality. We find ourselves in the position of being able to imagine almost any set of circumstances on this side of the grave, and yet quite unable to use such power to illumine conditions on the other, simply because it is a realm of the spirit. Neither does it help us to reflect upon our entry into this world, for that was the beginning of life and thought itself. Most of us cross that other river as developed, thinking beings.

Nevertheless, we can gather some definite ideas as to the nature of the change that awaits us, for even now we are spiritual as well

<sup>5</sup> Dunning, *Piers Plowman A-Text* pp. 120 sqq. The whole of his treatment of *Passus V* gives strong support for our having used Langland for the First Conversion and it should be read in extenso.

as material beings, although receiving all impressions of the outside world through the channels of the senses. It is reasonable enough to ask why any spiritual being should need bodily senses at all, though we may not agree with the Platonists that the soul is accidentally imprisoned in the body rather than united to it by its very nature. St Thomas, however, gives us an answer and it is one that deals a powerful blow to our pride. We are the lowest of all intelligent creatures—the infants of the spiritual universe. Above all, and illuminating everything below, is God, by his nature knowing all things utterly and immediately. At the head of a descending scale are the great spirits, understanding a great number of things with superb clarity, by means of a few acts of their intelligences. Below them, in their several gradations, are the lesser angels, understanding less perfectly, and needing to make more acts in order to do so. And so at last we come down to man himself, who not only needs to make the greatest number of acts, but also requires to have things presented to him pictorially, as it were, through the senses. We are spirits, but of the lowest order, and like children we need our crayons and our bricks, although like children we can rise above them.

After death we must dispense with all sense images—all pictures of the imagination. Things will be made known to us as they are revealed to the angels, i.e. directly by the simple influence of the divine light. This means that all our knowledge will come to us in a higher manner than is proper to our nature. This of course means an immense change in our mental life, and one that will be impressed upon us in several different ways.

In the first place, our knowledge of the natural world that we have left behind will be of a dim and a general kind. Our senses will no longer be in contact with it; our senses will be left behind with the body, and God will have drawn us away into the world of spirits. In short, we shall have entered, not merely into a new life, but into a new mode of living.

This being so, the question very naturally arises: How shall we remember those things that we have loved in the world that we have known? Can we revert to them when we wish, or will all past experiences be borne away on a river of lethe?

Here we have to remind ourselves that all our knowledge in this life has a two-fold aspect; everything is grasped both by our bodies and by our minds. The first grasp must obviously be loosened by death, but the second will certainly remain. In other words, the sensation fades, but not what our minds have drawn from it. This mental grasp will, in fact, become firmer than ever, because forgetfulness, or fading in the memory, really belongs to the shifting scenes and changing appearances of this life. Thus, although our knowledge of the world we have left must become misty, those things which we have loved and which our intellects have embraced, will remain within our knowledge, and perpetually.

Of course, it is one thing to remember our former loves when we are dead, and quite another to know what is happening to them. Knowledge of that sort cannot come to us naturally, but in the next life, as in this one, we can be informed on matters with which we are unacquainted. It might be possible that the newly-dead continually arriving in the spiritual realm would be allowed to communicate the latest information. In addition, such information could be conveyed to us by the angels, who have perfect knowledge of the natural stage, and all the dramas enacted upon it. Or God himself might grant us such knowledge in a direct manner by the simple influence of divine light. We can easily visualise circumstances in which such knowledge might well form part of the purgatorial flame. A good instance is suggested by Roger Pater's story of the Superior of a convent who used all kinds of tricks and artifices to convince people of her sanctity. The essence of her Purgatory was to know, after death, that her ruses had been successful, and that she had become the centre of an illicit cult. There can be no doubt that whatever knowledge is conducive to our progress will be in some manner conveyed to us.

A particularly important feature of life after death which we must not fail to note is its far greater intensification. In this life an immense amount of the soul's energy is expended upon the body. The human frame is a vast organisation of intricate mechanism and systems in a state of ceaseless activity. The soul is the living principle of it all, and is vitally concerned with every portion of it. It necessarily follows that, when death takes place, this stream of energy is diverted from the body into spiritual channels, for the disembodied soul has no activity apart from thought and will. Consequently, although we must know the natural world that we have left behind less perfectly, we shall enter the spiritual universe with a freedom and intensity far beyond anything previously possible. This will particularly make itself felt in that extraordinarily intimate manner in which we shall know our fellows who are with us in the same state. In this life we are continually at work gathering what people mean from the words they use and the gestures they employ. Words are ancient and yet living things, used to convey many delicate shades of meaning, whilst the message of a sign is coloured by the mood or temperament of the man receiving it. But it is certain that after death we shall no longer need to interpret the expression of a face or assess the tone of a voice. The nature and the mode of being of the human spirits with which we associate will be of the same kind as our own, and we shall understand them perfectly.

Space, we know, cannot be a condition of the spirit world, and neither can time, as we understand it now. Not that we really understand it, even at present. An hour spent in waiting for an operation is, in a very real sense, much longer than the same period spent with an absorbing novel. Yet the position of the sun

has changed and the hour hand has moved with the same precision in either case. Even in this world, although the mind accepts the sun and the clock, a sort of reservation is made to the effect that these gauges are not absolute. Beyond this world, the tides and the rhythmic beats of nature are no more. Past, present and future—the succession of events—are to be understood in the intensity of our spiritual life.

In the *Dream of Gerontius*, Cardinal Newman has expressed this situation well. In the immaterial world, he says, 'Time is not a common property'. In this world, of course, it is, as an hour is an hour all the world over, despite our various mental reactions to it. But in the hereafter it is an intensely individual matter, and the only gauge is the soul's experience of what takes place. The passage is well worth quoting:

For spirits and men by different standards mete  
The less and greater in the flow of time.  
By sun and moon, primeval ordinances—  
By stars which rise and set harmoniously—  
By the recurring seasons, and the swing,  
This way and that, of the suspended rod  
Precise and punctual, men divide the hours.  
Equal, continuous, for their common use.  
Not so with us in th'immortal world;  
But intervals in their succession  
Are measured by the living thought alone,  
And grow or wane with its intensity.  
And time is not a common property,  
But what is long is short, and swift is slow,  
And near is distant, as received and grasped  
By this mind and by that, and every one  
Is standard of his own chronology.

Our knowledge after death will extend, in a partial manner, even to the angels. 'Like calleth unto like', and we are akin to the angels in the sense that we are spirits. On the other hand, as we are so much lower in the scale than they, they might seem, from one point of view, as far removed from us as the divinities of pagan pantheons. Yet these 'divinities' will be in constant touch with us, for we shall have entered their world. The exploration of an angelic intelligence by a human soul, even in a partial manner, cannot fail to prove a majestic experience; not outside the possibilities of our nature, but certainly beyond any depths of knowledge to which we have previously penetrated.

It seems evident enough, too, that for the lost, angelic association of the reprobate order would bring them into touch with depths of infamy beyond any wickedness of which they themselves were capable. In other words there must be an introduction to a world of darkness having boundaries beyond their ken. For the holy souls, these remarkable experiences attendant upon death—the

great intensification of knowledge and love, the clear recollection of all spiritual experiences, freedom from spacial distances and from time sequence as we understand it now, perfect knowledge of other human spirits, together with angelic association—are changes that are scarcely a reflection of the knowledge that awaits them in the blessed vision of God. The holy souls stand upon the threshold of experience, and in a true sense all knowledge is before them. In God, of course, lie all the secrets of the universe as they are known to its Author, and the possession of God involves knowledge of so searching a kind as to defy all treatment of tongue or pen.

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## THE PASSION OF ST ANDREW

By

ANTHONY ROSS, O.P.

AFTER our Lord's ascension the Apostles were separated and went to preach in different countries. Andrew went to preach the Gospel in Scythia. From there he came into Europe and preached in Epirus and in Thrace, and after that in Achaia which is a part of Greece. There he converted many people and established churches. Among those whom he converted was Maximilla, the wife of Aegeas, who was governor of that part and chief judge. Aegeas was angry when he found that his wife had become a Christian and began to try to force Christians to sacrifice to the heathen gods. Then St Andrew went to him in the city of Patras, and said:

'You who are a judge should know your own judge, who is in heaven. Knowing him you should worship him and withdraw your support from false gods'.

Aegeas answered: 'You must be Andrew, who preach the false law which the princes of Rome have ordered to be destroyed'.

'The princes of Rome', said Andrew, 'have not known how the Son of God came and taught that idols are devilry, and support of them an offence against God. Those who cling to idols will be left by God. He will have nothing more to do with them'.

'That', retorted Aegeas, 'is the nonsense preached by your Jesus who was nailed on the gallows of the cross'.

'He was nailed on the cross with his own consent, for no sin or blame on his part, but for our redemption', Andrew said.

'When he was given up by one of his own disciples, seized by the Jews and nailed to the cross by the soldiers, how can you say that it was all with his own consent?'

Then Andrew began to show how Jesus went to his death willingly. First, because Jesus foretold his passion when he said to his disciples: 'We shall go up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man shall be betrayed'. Secondly, when Peter would have kept him

from going to Jerusalem he reproved him, saying: 'Get thee behind me, Satan'. Then again he showed that he had power to suffer death and to rise again when he said: 'I have power to lay down my life and take it up again'. Fourthly, he knew who was to betray him, when he gave him his supper without denouncing him. Fifthly, he chose the place where he would be captured, for he knew that the traitor would come there.

'All these things', said Andrew, 'I myself have witnessed'. And he went on to say how great is the mystery of the cross.

'No mystery,' said Aegeas, 'but a torture. If you will not listen to me you shall find out what sort of mystery it is'.

'If I were afraid of the gallows of the cross', replied Andrew, 'I would not preach its glory. I wish you would hear more about the mystery, for if you knew and believed in it you would be saved. The first Adam deserved death because of the tree, having broken the commandment of God concerning it. So it was fitting that the second Adam should drive away death by suffering it upon the tree. The first Adam was made of uncorrupt earth. It was fitting that the second, who was to undo his fault, should be born of a virgin. As the first man stretched out his hand in sin to the forbidden fruit it was fitting that the new Adam should stretch out his hands upon the cross. Adam tasted the forbidden fruit and found it sweet. Its effect is rightly taken away by its opposite, and so Jesus Christ was given bitter gall. And Christ has given us immortality, taking our mortality upon himself; for if he had not died, man would never have been made immortal'.

'Keep such foolishness for your disciples', Aegeas told him. 'Obey me and sacrifice to the almighty gods'.

'Every day I sacrifice to Almighty God a Lamb without spot', Andrew replied. 'And after he has been received by all the people he is still alive and whole'.

Aegeas asked how such a thing was possible, and Andrew told him that if he became a disciple he would find out.

'I shall find out', said Aegeas, 'by torturing you'.

He commanded angrily that Andrew should be taken away to prison until the following morning, when he would be asked again to sacrifice to the idols. Next morning Andrew was brought before him, and was once more threatened with torture if he would not sacrifice.

'You shall hang', said Aegeas, 'on the cross you praise so much, unless you do as I command'.

Andrew said joyfully that the more he suffered the more pleasing he would be to Christ. Then the governor had him beaten, and so that he should die more slowly and painfully, he ordered him to be tied to the cross instead of being nailed to it. The cross was set up by the sea shore. When they came in sight of it Andrew ran ahead of the soldiers crying:

'Hail, O Cross, blessed by the body of Jesus Christ! I come to

thee gladly. Take me gladly as a disciple of him that hung on thee. I know thy mystery. Thou art set up in the world to make firm what is unstable. Part of thee stretches up to heaven to signify the heavenly word which is above all. Part is planted in the earth and goes down into the depths, so that through thee may be joined together the things that are in the earth, those that are under the earth, and the things of heaven; and another part is spread out to right and to left, to put to flight the power of the evil one and to gather together the whole world. I have always adored thee and have desired to embrace thee. O Cross which received beauty and nobility from the members of our Lord whom I have so long loved and so greatly desired, take me hence and bring me to my master'.

While he spoke he took off his clothes himself and gave them to the executioners. And they hung him on the cross as had been commanded. The people who stood by saw that as he hung there he smiled and even laughed a little. One of them asked him:

'Servant of God why do you smile? We mourn because we are losing you'.

Then Andrew cried to the people: 'I smile at the uselessness of Aegeas's efforts to punish us. The follower of Christ cannot be punished by torture or death, for by them he becomes known to God'. And he preached to them for two days, hanging on the cross. The crowd grew more and more indignant with Aegeas when they saw the gentleness and patience of Andrew, and some began to say: 'The blood of the innocent is condemned without cause. The holy man should not suffer this. It is Aegeas who should die'. The tumult grew until Aegeas was afraid for his life and decided to loose Andrew from the cross. But as he drew near, Andrew cried out:

'Why have you come, Aegeas? If it is to ask penance for your sins you shall have what you ask. But if you come to take me down you are too late. You shall not take me down alive, for I see my Lord and King waiting for me'.

Then he prayed aloud: 'Lord, do not let me leave this cross alive, for I have long borne the charge which was given to me. I have watched over what was placed in my care, and have so long laboured that now I would gladly be delivered. Thou knowest how often the world has tried to draw me from purity of contemplation, how often it has made me sorrow, how I have fought against it as far as I was able and with thy help have conquered. Now, Lord, let me have the reward which thou hast promised. Bid me give up to thee that which was given into my care, and keep me in thy resurrection. Receive me in peace into thy everlasting tabernacles, that by my death many may enter in unto thee and rest in thy glory'.

When he said this there came a bright light from heaven, which shone round the cross for half an hour, so that during that time

no one could see him. At the moment it departed he gave up his soul to God. And Maximilla the wife of Aegeas took his body down from the cross and buried it honourably.

Tradition is agreed that St Andrew was put to death at Patras by the Roman governor. There are various fragmentary accounts of his martyrdom, and three longer narratives, all deriving probably from a more ancient document of the 3rd century or even earlier. Details can be found in *The Apocryphal New Testament* translated by M. R. James (Oxford 1924), where a reconstructed version of the Passion of St Andrew is given. In the 13th century Blessed James of Voragine, O.P., retold the story as part of his collection of lives of the saints known as *The Golden Legend*. The version given above is drawn mainly from *The Golden Legend*, with a few slight additions from Dr James's edition. The Office for the Feast of St Andrew (Nov. 30), in the Roman and in the Dominican breviary, draws extensively upon the address to the Cross.

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## THE TRUE BASIS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

### *Summary of the discussion by THE EDITOR*

THE discussion consequent on the challenging article of Père Nicolas in the July and August LIFE OF THE SPIRIT has centred round two main issues. The first is concerned with the general view raised by Fr Scott-James (September) who suggested that the French Dominican took for granted the subjective emphasis of the post-Tridentine spirituality. The true basis, he implied, should be centered on *objective beatitude*, the end which gives meaning to the whole action of religious life. The love of God in himself must be set before the young religious, rather than the perfection of the religious himself. This is the goal if he is to avoid strain and break-down.

Against Fr James's thesis it has been argued that St Thomas himself, sufficiently pre-Tridentine and objective to satisfy most, constantly regards the religious life as a school of perfection; and as perfection in his theology stands for charity, the love of God itself, 'the school of perfection' carries no subjective stigma with it. It is a slur too on the Council of Trent and the theologians who have since considered religious life. Fr A. Valentin draws attention to the teaching of 'that great master, Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle:

First as to what the spiritual life should *not* be.

'Let us not regard ourselves. Should we contemplate a dead thing? For we are dead, and we have no true life save with Jesus Christ in God'.

Next, what it is.

'My sisters, incessantly fix your eyes on Jesus—you must offer and give yourselves to him—you should be naught but a sheer capacity for him—filled with him'. So again, 'We ought to love patience and gentleness more because they conform us to

Jesus Christ the patient and gentle, than because they make us patient and gentle'.

But Fr Valentin agrees to the general need to cease the discouraging search after perfection. Fr G. Flanagan agrees that it is a question of wrong emphasis on the idea of perfection, but he takes up the cudgels in defence of the great Council, which was compelled to insist heavily on discipline in view of the appalling licence, crass ignorance and rebellious illuminism of the time. The discipline was, however, misinterpreted as time went on, for it tended to become

a routine which suited the absolutism characteristic of the growth of the idea of the divine right of kings. This became all the more established in later times when the wealth of Puritan Britain and America gave them the opportunity of improving their outlook not only on their own countries but to a very considerable extent on Europe as well.

An Anglican novice-master also writes in the same sense, pointing to de Caussade as an example of a master of objective spirituality since Trent, but insisting that the treatment of the spiritual life should always begin with awareness of God as with St Benedict, rather than the negative treatise on mortification of later writers. St Benedict, he affirms, is not concerned with mortification (even in St Paul's more general use of the term) so much as 'to provide means by which "we may by a straight course reach our Creator".' He sums up the matter in the words of S. M. C.'s novel *Brother Petroc's Return*: 'God dwells in the centre of a pure heart—we may reach that purity and prepare a place for him by cleansing away all obstacles. Or we may cleave to him by faith, hope and charity, fixing our gaze on him, and by the very intensity of that gaze remove all that is contrary to him'.

Fr James may be mistaken as to the part played by the Council of Trent. But there can be little doubt as to the fact of the over-emphasis he describes. With the world of thought in the West turned utterly subjective, with Descartes and Pascal as masters of mind and heart, it was inevitable that the character even of life with God, the life of grace, should be affected. Père Nicolas claimed to be returning to the traditional doctrine of religion as found in St Thomas. But he did not take this change of emphasis sufficiently into account. The criticism is that he did not reach back beyond the influence of the 'perfectionist' school of thought. This is important because with the change of emphasis there has come a change in terminology. Père Nicolas does insist that 'Perfection' means simply the love of God, charity; and so for St Thomas all the vows and religious observances are ordained simply for fulfilment in the love of God. This is indeed a revelation to most people today, particularly for those who struggle to explain the 'State of Perfection'. The idea of human perfection has become static in its subjective aspect, it is the integration of a man's

personality, when all his powers are gathered in unity and harmony. Père Nicolas brings out clearly that perfection consists in reality in an act of love, which of course itself remains always perfectible, capable of further intensity. To seek perfection in the sense of self-completion, integration, is evidently a different thing from seeking to empty oneself in a surrendering act of the love of God. Subjectively 'Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father' suggests that the comparison lies in being *self-contained*, which may be interpreted as *satisfied* with self, self-satisfied. Love is perfection and perfection is love.

Père Nicolas has rightly insisted on this illuminating doctrine of the perfection to which the religious is dedicated. But there runs through much of what he has written a suspicion of a distinction between love and perfection—perfection is the *effect* of love, and in order to be perfect a man must therefore love God. The suspicion may be slight in view of the categoric identification of the two elsewhere in the article. The chief criticism is therefore that he did not make sufficiently clear this change-over in emphasis, and was apparently not sufficiently aware that 'perfection' has come to mean something so different that St Thomas's word is incomprehensible to most moderns.

The second series of letters concerning Père Nicolas's article went more deeply into the matter itself. The article has been attacked mainly in its attitude to the severity of the rule and the fulfilment of observances. The question raised by Fr James has of necessity to be settled before facing this one, because we have to seek the cause of the apparent weakening of health and stamina in present generations which brings Père Nicolas to suggest a mitigation in 'observances'. If the strain comes from a wrong focus rather than from an undermined physique, then any reform which tends to mitigate the strenuousness of religious life will only hasten the final collapse. A Dominican father writes:

'St Francis de Sales whom l'abbé Bremond terms the saint of devout humanism founded the Visitation Order precisely to give a chance of living the devout life in community to those "of courageous hearts but of feeble health". Yet a superioress of the same Order can assure us today that this purposely mitigated rule of the 17th century is now considered too austere for modern constitutions. . . . We are not a little surprised to hear Fr Nicolas tell us that: "Obedience, humility, perpetual constraint, mortification, the interior tension of the effort to overcome self, tend to an atmosphere which weighs like lead on some natures in themselves generous and called by Christ to the highest union with God. This is perhaps the cause of that psychic fatigue to which modern temperaments are so liable and which is created or aggravated by too much constraint". The Pope might conceivably dispense certain exterior observances such as the monastic tonsure and even perpetual abstinence if proved detrimental to apostolic vigour, but he

will unquestionably reply, "Non possumus" to those who complain of "too much constraint" or "physical fatigue" engendered by the practice of obedience and humility, etc. . . . Psychical fatigue or neurosis may just as well come from the interior conflict caused in the generous soul which longs for wise direction, dislikes wilful singularity, fears excessive self-assertion and yet is compelled by unfavourable circumstances to lower his ideals. To sacrifice what is clearly essential in spiritual direction handed down from apostolic times in order to pander to the modern cult of softness and of almost complete independence of all tradition is to court disaster. St Teresa of Avila puts it in her forthright way: "To think that God will admit to his friendship a lover of his own ease is madness". The real answer to the problem lies in this, that *every religious* should feel bound by his or her profession to tend *consciously and perseveringly* to perfection. . . . St Thomas (2. 2. Q 186 ad 1) states: "He who enters religion does not make profession to be perfect but to endeavour to attain perfection, just as he who enters the schools does not profess to have knowledge but to study in order to acquire knowledge. . . . Hence a religious does not violate his profession if he be not perfect but only if he despises to tend to perfection". He continues (ad 2): "All, both religious and seculars, are bound in a certain measure to do whatever they can (i.e., to love God with their whole heart). Yet there is a way of fulfilling this precept so as to avoid sin, namely if one do what one can as required by the conditions of one's state in life, provided there is no contempt of doing better things which contempt sets the mind against spiritual progress".

There can be no doubt that since the beginning of Christianity there has never been a time when young people were so generous and yet so undisciplined. This apparently is the conclusion of all those who have joined in the present discussion. Those who offer themselves to religious Orders today are thirsting for penance, are anxious to surrender everything to the service of God. Several correspondents have drawn a parallel between this and the generosity displayed by young pilots, blitzed families and daring commandos during the war. The young person in love with our Lord can and does take on mortifications quite as strenuous as any of previous ages. The stamina is there; the physique of modern times has not greatly deteriorated; and there is no reason to mitigate the strenuousness of regular observance.

But the question is whether these youngsters can 'stick the pace' for the length of a life-time. The heroism called forth by the war made demands for brief though complete sacrifice. Religious life demands a life-long martyrdom; and perhaps that is where health will break down under the strain. For the present age is an age of undiscipline when men will freely choose to do the heroic thing, but will resent being made to do it by a superior. To say the least,

this weakness in modern education tends to dissipate the power of the spirit of generous sacrifice. From the theological point of view it takes the very heart out of the voluntary mortifications and acts of generosity, for obedience in the will is the source of true exterior sacrifice. This paradox is more likely to produce a nervous tension than any lack of 'physique'.

Any religious order as it continues its existence will gather more rules and observances to deal with the changing conditions of its life and activities. Inevitably the customs and accepted ways of behaviour accumulate; and, though in themselves they may exercise a very beneficial influence on the soul that accepts them in all true obedience, they may in fact be too numerous and detailed for the modern child of paradox to assimilate. It may, therefore, be desirable that the observances be reduced to the fundamental ones which characterise the beginning of a new Order. An old religious of 84 years is among the correspondents on this point; and she writes:

'What does he (Père Nicolas) mean by "physiological change of the 20th-century man"? Cf. the nerve shown by the commandos, airmen, civilians, old people, women and young children during the blitz. We know the use of disinfectans, the value of fresh air and cleanliness; surely health should have improved. Girls in general seem much stronger than their fainting and delicate Victorian ancestors. They are better educated and critical and can appreciate their rule better, and have better judgment for following the Holy Spirit. Hence 10 Commandments, 3 vows, Rule, Constitutions, are necessary and sufficient. God will certainly give the grace to keep these if he gives the vocation. If any change be made let it be in the abolition of minor customs that have accumulated under individual superiors'.

The great danger always is the formalism of exterior obedience, as another correspondent points out. But this applies to the old ways and new spirit equally. The old habit of observances will often be satisfied by the accomplishment of the external routine. While the young are often carried away by the romantic appeal of external actions and instruments like sleeping on the floor, keeping long vigils, wearing hair-shirts and taking disciplines.

It comes back, therefore, to the question of how to train and supernaturalise the heroic impulses so manifest in the young men and women of today, and how to do it without crushing enthusiasm and initiative. Père Nicolas was right to return to the consideration of the root of it all, Perfection, the Love of God, Obedience and the Service of God. All this opens wide vistas for future articles and discussions in **THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT**.

## REVIEWS

## SAINT CAMILLUS\*

No one in our generation has done more to make the saints known, and therefore loved, than Father Martindale. In every age the catalogue of sanctity expresses afresh the life of divine grace, taking possession of men and women, and children too—kings and the beggars at their gates, hermits and mothers of families, missionaries who have converted nations and unimportant persons who have no memorial but their own holiness: in a real sense the history of the Church is the history of her saints. For the Incarnation is not only a truth of Faith, to be believed: it is an event whose meaning is re-enacted in the life of every *alter Christus*.

'In this hour, then, when so many thousands of—dare I say?—"innocent sinners" are being hurled into the next world, or crawling into it in agony, may St Camillus pray especially for the battle-fields, and for the famine and pestilence that stalk in the wake of war. And may we, who all of us are sick, be ever more vitally incorporated into Christ, in whom alone is everlasting health'. The words from Fr Martindale's Introduction express the relevance of Camillus to the world we know. Not only the impressive work of charity he established, the Order of the Ministers of the Sick, which, nearly three centuries before the International Red Cross was established, brought precisely that symbol, in its redemptive meaning, to the care of the suffering wherever they might be. But the man himself, who under God made this possible, he, the soldier of fortune, the gambler, the Franciscan who failed: Camillus stands out against the world of pain and suggests the Christian's answer. All that is most intimately his; the providential failures of his early efforts to serve God, the imperious demands of his ultimate vocation, and most of all his own bodily suffering, constant and unmitigated—all this is a special gift of God's, designed to make Camillus a perfect instrument of charity. Christ has come to dwell in him, and only now can he serve Christ in the persons of those who suffer.

The crowded background of sixteenth-century Rome, with its maze of ecclesiastical bureaucracy, its unimaginable splendours and miseries, might seem to obscure the single-minded soldier whose only concern was to serve God through the sanctification of pain. There were the usual objections. Fantastic that priests should give themselves to the squalid work of a hospital ward: others could do it better. Intrigue at the curia, misgivings even among his own followers, appalling casualties. (When Camillus resigned his

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\* *Life of Saint Camillus*, by C. C. Martindale, S.J. (Sheed & Ward, 8s. 6d.)

Generalate, 170 of his 400 or so subjects had already died in the exercise of their special vocation). But Camillus remained serene; he had no fear for his Order. 'God will cause men to be born strong enough to help and defend it'.

Camillus's purpose was a simple one. 'I intend that never must the care for the spiritual as such be separated from the care of the body'. His Order was designed for the sanctification of its members, 'but always in the person of servants of the sick, and of the sick themselves'. He did a heroic amount to improve the material conditions of hospitals, transforming with practical enthusiasm cumbrous institutions into places of efficient and hygienic treatment. (He insists on each patient having a good nightcap—'so that they may not be as they are, with nothing on their heads'!) Yet merely natural virtue can achieve as much, or more, as witness the sterilised perfection of many modern hospitals. But there is more to sickness than a disease to be cured. It is, however mysteriously, a gift of God's, and, as Fr Martindale justly remarks, 'where nursing has become a profession instead of being a vocation, you will *not* get that spiritual contact between nurse or doctor and patient which is infinitely more important than administration of drugs'.

And here perhaps is the special importance of St Camillus for our time. He reminds a world that is desperately sick where the solution for its sickness is at last to be found. No amount of technical skill or hygienic devotedness can reach beyond the physical pain which reflects, so sharply, a disorder yet greater than its own. The confident assurances of the psychiatrist, even, leave far more unanswered than they explain. Such a book as Dr Moran's recent *In My Fashion* reveals very clearly how pitifully inadequate is the modern certainty of 'cure'. The legacy of disaster, even in the physical order, can never be fully redeemed except in the light of God's will—and Calvary is inherited too.

The modern Red Cross, we are told by its historian, 'has no religious significance'. Indeed, 'the plain red cross on a white ground was officially authorised because it was realised that it must be clearly distinguishable from a distance'. St Camillus included a cross, worn on the right side of the cassock, as part of the habit of his Order. It was to be 'lion-coloured' or tawny, to suggest the wood of the Cross of Calvary. In time it became simply red, and, for the Camillans at least, this cross is the whole explanation of their work—the renouncing of self and the following of Christ, and him crucified. Here, then, is suffering made redemptive; here is the 'problem of pain' answered. Fr Martindale's book, written with his vivid awareness of what is human—and therefore most immediately lovable—in Camillus, is very much a tract for the times, and puts us once more deeply in his debt.

To HEAVEN THROUGH A WINDOW: *A Life of St Gerard Majella.* By John Carr, C.S.S.R. (Sands; 12s. 6d.)

THE apparent unreality of sanctity is perhaps today the greatest obstacle to a sympathetic understanding of the saints. It finds its source in the idea that holiness is concerned exclusively with those things which fall into the category 'ecclesiastical' or 'spiritual', and that digging potatoes, or a liking for cats, or the study of history, or cycling, walking or stamp-collecting, and all such things have nothing to do with man's perfection in the sight of God. They are like the straw or wood shavings which must be included in the parcel to protect the fragile vase; when the parcel is unpacked (presumably at the last judgment) they will be put aside and burnt. On this count the saints would be men who never looked at the stars for joy, only worked because they had to live, and certainly indulged in no hobbies. Too frequently people imagine that is how saints are made.

Even traditionalist Catholics sometimes ask themselves whether St Gerard's importance for those who come after him does not lie rather in his miracles than in his imitability. He is more like a star than a signpost. We think of him as of a craftsman who achieved the finest results with the crudest tools, the miracles supplementing human workmanship. Father Carr makes no pretentious claims, but he does in fact correct this error. Gerard of Muro is a star for us to admire, true enough, but despite his extreme sinlessness and his prodigious power of miracle he was more normal than we imagine. 'Anyone who fancies that sanctity knocks the character out of a man will get a rude shock'. That was the secret of Gerard: he was himself every moment of his life. He was born in an unsophisticated world where to be oneself was the usual thing, and in that sense he gave grace an unusually good opportunity, so to say. Therefore it is no more surprising to read of early indications of holiness in such a life than it is to read of 'a Mozart scribbling harmonies with his baby fingers and of the future victor of Marengo and Austerlitz marshalling his tin soldiers'. Such things are straws in the wind; the danger lies in thinking them trade winds, for 'it is easy when reading Gerard's life, crowded as it is with mystical and miraculous phenomena, to picture him as being in an almost unbroken ecstasy or working unremitting wonders. Numerous as these undoubtedly were, they were after all but isolated incidents in days filled with commonplace but more important things done with supreme excellence because done to the last iota absolutely and solely for God'. He was a craftsman who earned his living like any other man: he was a late vocation who started to be a saint by being a tailor; his life in the monastery was a life of daily work: he was a man who knew human love—in so far as it can ever be separated from divine—and above all he suffered. He was consumptive and suffered like any other consumptive in 1750. The difference was that he was vividly aware of his suffering as of everything else in his life. It is this vivid understanding and love in a life of such commonplace simplicity which seems the greatest miracle

of all. Miracles there were in plenty, but miracles are not short cuts; they are manifestations of God: 'Great saints are God's resounding counterblasts to great sinners'.

In a large volume Father Carr elaborates these things. While he affirms strongly that 'They who are not prepared to meet the miraculous in the life of Gerard Majella have no business reading this book', he does everything possible to assure the sceptic by his historical thoroughness and honesty. The only drawback to such an exhaustive method is indigestibility: great profusion of facts with authoritative sources tempts us to focus on the trees and not the wood. One might perhaps suggest that this book provides a source for a more stimulating and less bulky work on a saint whose enthusiasm could mean so much to the twentieth century.

The style like the format is on the whole workmanlike, but there are one or two regrettable slacknesses: 'Father Giovenale . . . got a holy and happy thought' (p. 134); 'The students lost no time in organising the holy outing' (p. 271). Such things, like the occasional over-use of the cumulative device, are only Homeric nods, but they are none the less unhappy.

Finally one would welcome an even greater insistence on that which was basic in the life of the saint. It is nothing peripheral like a list of resolutions, but something more central, something that lies at the heart of his holiness, something we can find expressed in his often-repeated 'non è niente'. It is more than detachment, it is more than balance: we should call it supernatural common-sense; whatever name we give it it springs from a faithful nurturing of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and is a kind of composite Fruit—a Joy-Peace-Patience. It is the secret of Gerard's vivid flaming love of reality: his attraction lies in the fact that like many of us he had nothing, materially speaking, to stimulate him, yet his enthusiasm thrived. For him the daily miracle of his own existence was more wonderful than any miraculous increase of food or drink: Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* reads as a penetrating commentary on such a saint. Such vision is the true message of the mystics and can never be too deeply underlined by any hagiographer, because that is the first and the last gift the saints leave us.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

**MONTHLY RECOLLECTION.** By Rev. Father Victor, C.P. Translated from the French by Rev. Father Edmund, C.P. (Gill & Son; 1s.) THIS little book is conspicuous for its simplicity, and may be useful to many religious sisters. There is perhaps a lack of dogmatic stress, and too much self-examination. It does not appear useful as a hand-book for general spiritual reading or meditation, but rather for occasional use at days of recollection.

In writing for the many surely it is an exaggeration to say: 'Let the subject of your meditation be, by preference, the Passion of our Lord and the Sorrows of the blessed Virgin' (p. 28). We may here recall the words of St Thomas when speaking of meditation as a stimulant to

devotion: 'Matters concerning the Godhead are, in themselves, the strongest incentive to love and consequently to devotion, because God is supremely lovable. Yet such is the weakness of the human mind that it needs a guiding hand, not only to the knowledge, but also to the love of divine things by means of certain sensible objects known to us. Chief among these is the humanity of Christ, according to the Preface, *that through knowing God visibly, we may be caught up to the love of things invisible*. Wherefore matters relating to Christ's humanity are the chief incentive to devotion, leading us thither as a guiding hand, although devouion itself has for its object matters concerning the Godhead (*Summa Theologica*, IIaIIae, 82, iii, ad 2um.)

The examen for Confession is not entirely satisfactory. Sins are the matter for self-examination here and not failures to comply with an arbitrary programme in matters of counsel.

On the remote thanksgiving after Holy Communion this misleading phrase occurs: 'When I leave the chapel, I carry our Lord with me. He accompanies me to school, to work, to the sick' (p. 43). But it must be understood that this is not a sacramental presence.

It is said that 'the Superiorress cannot forbid the Sisters to go to confession outside the convent' (p. 37.) But she is not obliged to give permission to her subjects to go out of the convent whenever they like, or contrary to the rule or to the customs of the community.

The sources for spiritual reading are scanty, not even including Holy Scripture. Some more solid reading is required to save Sisters from intellectual starvation and from dwelling on themselves.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

#### MARITIME LITURGICAL WEEK. (Charlottetown P.E.I.; Aug. 28-31, 1945.)

The Maritime Provinces of Canada last year held their first liturgical week under the title 'Integrating Life through the Liturgy'. One cannot but be pleased to see the birth of such a new movement in Canada. The useful bibliography at the back of the book shows that the aim of the volume is the liturgical formation of its readers. Why not, then, leave out the polite formalities and why not confine the publication to extracts, at least where the talks are of less interest? The theme chosen, though it opened the way to the doctrinal bases of liturgical life, has too often tempted the speakers into generalities. We hope that in the following years the subject matter will be more limited and the talks less numerous.

NOTE: One cannot speak of worship *in* God (p. 18.)

PIERRE GY, O.P.

#### WALSINGHAM: THE STORY OF A FAMOUS SHRINE. By H. M. Gillett (Burns Oates; 5s.)

This is the story of Walsingham up to the sad day when, at Bishop Latimer's suggestion, 'Our great sibyll, the doll at Islington with her old syster of Walsyngham, her yonge syster of Ipswych, with the

other two sistres of Doncaster and Penryesse' were burnt at Chelsea. Mr Gillett describes with a detail that is sure to interest every pilgrim there 'the wrackes as now do shewe Of that so holy lande'; and the enthusiasm with which he writes of the gradual return of Catholics to Walsingham should turn many of his readers themselves into pilgrims. They will get, on Catholic terrain, only so far as the Slipper or Siyple Chapel—the chapel 'on the way there—but having read the story of how that chapel was acquired they will not doubt that our Lady will find a means to restore even the shrine itself to Catholic devotion.

Mr Gillett writes with evident love of every stone in the shrine. It is a pity that he shows rather less insight into the human characters involved, notably Erasmus. But to ask for every excellence is to forget our human condition. The thirteen full-plate photographs of Walsingham, and the interesting material collected in the appendices already by themselves earn our uncarping gratitude.

COLUMBA RYAN, O.P.

**OUR LADY'S FEASTS.** By Sister Mary Jean Dorcy, O.P. (Sheed & Ward; 8s. 6d.)

In the last hundred years, since our Lady's appearance to Bernadette and to the children at Fatima, there has been a constant stream of 'devotional literature—books, pamphlets and papers—professing for the greater part, 'to enable us to see our Lady more clearly'. And since so much of what has been written has only served to cloud the Mother of God in greater obscurity, and to sicken Catholic and non-Catholic alike by its treacly artificiality, new books in our Lady's honour tend to be immediately suspect—especially when written, as this one is, by an American-born religious, primarily for the 'teenage'. Moreover the illustrations—silhouettes 'made with scissors'—and the 'illuminated' initial letters are in the main very definitely of the sugar-cake tradition—a fact all the more deplorable in view of the excellent type and setting of the letterpress.

But, disregarding the occasional 'purple' patch, the accompanying prose passages—10 of them, 'meditating' in turn eight of our Lady's major feasts and those of the Nativity of our Lord and the Holy Family—have a very attractive directness and simplicity which is in refreshing, and fitting, contrast to the tone and language dear to the intellectual exponents of 'modern' materialism. It is this directness which will commend the book to all those who love our Lady, whether they are within the prescribed age-limit or not, and to all who are not too proud to 'apply for the heavenly help of the holy family'. M.C.

**FROM SIX GREAT CITIES.** By Berners Wilson (Collins; 2s. 6d.)

Quite recently some of the leaders of our Y.C.W. boys' section came to me with the request for a mid-week young workers' service. Their only stipulation was that it must be lively and in their own language. (There must be in the parish 1,000 Catholic boys and girls, 80 per cent. of whom seldom go to Mass, and 99 per cent. of whom never go

to an evening service). The young leaders said that they were always hearing and talking of Christ, but that they seldom got a chance of feeling him. They believed that, if we could have a young workers' service in their own language, it would help their spiritual life and they could make it a great success. But if it was in Latin and in big English words about pie in the sky, then it would be a flop.

So we got together and, first with the boys, then with the girls, hammered out the tools for this task of feeling Christ. We enjoyed doing the job and hope we will be allowed to use the tools and make new ones.

Now the interesting thing is that the content and shape of the service is not unlike that devised by the B.B.C. for the series of talks and youth services which were broadcast last winter and which are now published under the title *From Six Great Cities*. The book was only sent me for review after our draft for a young workers' service had been submitted to authority.

The book, published for the reasonable price of 2s. 6d., contains the talks as given before large gatherings in each of six big industrial cities and also the form of the service used. The talks are first-rate, lively, concrete and deeply Christian. Berners Wilson, the Church of England minister, who gave the talks, stands four-square on the divinity of Christ and on man's absolute need of Jesus.

The speaker went straight, simply and honestly, to the heart of young people's problems—problems of prayer, of work, of friendship, of love, of home, of play, in fact of life. And he handled these problems with gentle, firm, clear insight, and always found the solution in a return to Christ—the Christ of the Gospels, the Christ in our midst.

The weakness of the talks, hidden by the speaker's faith, insight and persuasiveness, is that a devotion to our Lord not fed upon and expressed in Eucharistic prayer is bound to dry up when the cares and lures of this life encompass it. And of course to 'feel' Jesus, one must love his Mother.

In one or two places, the speaker, having faced up to one or other acute modern problem, slips off with a too-easy appeal to return to Christ—and youth services. Thus, in his talk on 'You and Your Job', he faces the terrible problem of those 'whose work has nothing whatever to do with the life of the nation or with people's needs, such as standing by a conveyor belt and never seeing the finished product', but his only solution is to find compensation in a club or youth service, and later on, perhaps, in a county college.

Again, in the talk 'You and Your Friends', he deals with the question of 'necking', and maintains, quite rightly, that, at times, it can be quite as immoral as promiscuous intercourse. But he thinks that the main cause leading up to it is vanity—the girl not wishing to seem old-fashioned, and the boy wanting to show that he is tough. Are not ignorance, with its concomitant curiosity, on the one hand, and a deep, if unconscious, sense of frustration on the other hand, just as potent causes?

However, these points are open to discussion, for which, no doubt, there was not time during the original talks. And they in no way lessen the value of the book, which is most interesting, inspiring, exemplary and encouraging.

BERNARD GOODE.

THE GOD OF THE CHRISTIANS. By Dom Augustine Morris. (The Dacre Press; 5s.)

This book is a plain statement of the Christian belief in God, and as this it is valuable and highly successful. It is written for those who have a vague belief in God as Ruler of the Universe, but little more; who turn to God in a crisis, but seldom or never at any other time. It would not convince an agnostic or open the eyes of an atheist—to them it would seem to beg the question; but it does not set out to do this; the purpose of it is to explain lucidly what the Christian faith teaches about God.

Whether this book will be read much by those for whom it seems intended, is doubtful. We believe the author to be too sanguine in thinking that no one can altogether escape wondering what is the purpose of life and whether there is a God. The vast majority of men and women seem to go through life quite unconcerned about God so long as their beliefs are filled and their appetites are satisfied. If the average man or woman of our era turns to God at all, it is only as a last resort, as something that will not do any harm and might do some good. If people could only be stirred to think, the battle would be half-won. But whether this book will be read by many or by few, certain it is that no one could read it without profit. We ourselves could not put it down, and sat up late into the night to finish it.

Every chapter, almost every page has something good, the whole book is steeped with fundamental truths that should be obvious and well known, but, even by Catholics, are too often neglected and forgotten. We cannot resist from quoting a few passages taken at random: 'It is not petition but adoration which is the most essential element in prayer'; 'The woman who wastes time in observing a glorious sunset, time which ought to have been spent in visiting a sick friend is by no means growing in the love of God. The married couple who invest in a car to enjoy the beauties of nature instead of having a baby are worshipping themselves rather than God'; 'God's liberty is in no way limited but greatly augmented by the fact that he cannot sin'; 'The special characteristic of a holy man is that the actions of his life are deliberately directed towards God and performed in constant dependence upon his grace. An atheist may be a good man; but no man can be holy unless he is a man of prayer'. All this is excellent and needs saying, and there is much more of the same.

BRUNO S. JAMES.

#### ERRATUM

In the October issue, page 120, paragraph 2, from St Jerome on Purgatory, read: The Seraphim . . . are also sent . . . to those who need purification, and who, for the sins of their former life, *need purgation by punishment* (Ep. xviii, 9).

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THE Publisher today finds it difficult to predict the exact date of publication for the volumes he has in preparation or in the press. The delays in production are often incalculable as well as inevitable. But we are glad to report that two books announced for the end of September are now available.  *WHATSOEVER HE SHALL SAY* by Ferdinand Valentine, O.P. is an essentially practical book, in the form of a correspondence to keep it to concrete reality. The short letters of the young woman Theophila are answered at length by the author who thus shows her the way to a life of prayer in the world. (Price 5s. net).

*THE CONDEMNATION OF ST THOMAS AT OXFORD* (Aquinus Paper No. 5) by Daniel Callus, O.P., S.T.M., D.Phil., is a very different work. Addressed to the learned world of historians and those interested in Thomism it reveals the turbulent reception given to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor when it first came to Oxford in the thirteenth century. In view of the popularity of St Thomas in the University today this makes very interesting reading. (Price 1s. net).

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*IN THE PRESS*, and therefore to be expected between now and Christmas, there are several new books and papers, including two more Aquinas Papers: *CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY AND COMMON LAW* by Richard O'Sullivan, K.C., a substantial development of a paper showing the debt of English Common Law to the scholastics and the decline consequent on the abandonment of the connection with the *philosophia perennis* (Price about 2s. 6d.), and *THE SORROW OF GOD* by Gerald Vann, O.P., showing how God participates in our own distress (Price about 9d.). Also by Gerald Vann, the long announced *EVE AND THE GRYPHON* should be ready very shortly (Price 5s. net). *AN OLD APOSTLE SPEAKS*, which includes a memoir of Fr McNabb by Fr Vann, will also be on sale very soon (Price 1s. 6d.). *JEROME SAVONAROLA* by Mgr John O'Connor; *PILGRIM CROSS*, an illustrated account of the Vezelay Peace Pilgrimage (price about 2s. 6d.); *DOMINICAN CONTEMPLATIVES IN ENGLAND* by a Nun of Headington are among other works in the hands of the printer.

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